

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Andrew McIntyre and I am here today to share my personal and professional story about medical marijuana and the life saving impact it has had on me in hopes that my story will inspire others and help broaden the access to life saving treatments.

In 1976 at 6 years old I was diagnosed with seizure disorder. Back in 1976 there were few treatments this type of condition and I was lucky enough to be placed in a drug trial. That drug trial worked in minimizing my seizures and for a few months my life was close to "normal" however, due to the toxicity of the drugs which were making my life "normal" my liver started to shut down, I was immediately pulled off the medicinal trial and stopped taking that liver destroying drug. I am sitting here before you a proud, productive, successful member of society and successful small business owner.

I was extremely lucky to have an amazing mother who fought to get me the best care possible and she found a doctor, Dr. Finegold, who worked with me to get me onto a diet he designed which alleviated 60 % of my symptoms simply by removing any type of processed food from my diet. By 8 years old I was growing my own organic food. When I was about 9 years old, I accidentally planted cannabis seeds. As the plant grew I incorporated it into my diet and found that the marijuana helped alleviate my crippling and often weeks long migraines.

For the last thirty six years I have been working on refining and developing my own medical marijuana treatments. In 1986, I build my own vaporizer to take my medicine, I wish I had perfected and patented my vaporizer design but I digress. I graduated Merrimack College with a Bachelor of Sciences in Pre-Med Biology. Over the years I have the fortunate opportunity to work with many doctors intimately involved in the human genome project and pioneering projects. My research has focused on the cannabis plant's ability to influence the plasticity of our own neurological cells.

I lived most of my life in Massachusetts but three years ago I moved to Maine where medical marijuana is legal so for the first time in my life I would be able to access life saving medical care without fear of arrest.

Since moving to Maine I have become a caregiver of medical marijuana, I grow marijuana and provide care for patients. Fourteen months ago Maine legalized the sale and use of medical marijuana for pediatric patients. Immediately I jumped at the opportunity to provide to children the medicine which turned my own life around as a child. Knowing the value such medicine can have on a child's life I initially provided product free of charge. However, after that charitable service evaporated my earnings and forced me to tap into my retirement accounts for living expenses, I now charge a nominal fee.

And that is why I am here today. The opportunity to provide medicine to children suffering for epilepsy and other disorders isn't viewed as a cash cow in this industry but a true opportunity to positively influence the lives of some of the most treasured and vulnerable members of our society – our children.

I remember what its like to be 6 years old, scared of when my next seizure would strike, afraid when the medicine the doctors gave me only made me sicker. I am proud to be part of the solution and offer hope to the 3% of the population which is affected by epilepsy. I am proud to offer hope to children and adults alike, to show them that just because you have epilepsy doesn't mean you can't become a proud, productive member of society. I wouldn't be able to do those things without the cannabis treatment protocols I've developed.

I am in front of you today to say to everyone here that these plants do work, these plants save lives and that the medicinal properties need to be studied. If we are able to crack the code as to how marijuana mitigates the symptoms of epilepsy without the serious health side effects of other drugs, we would without exaggeration have a medical breakthrough the size and scope of which cannot be understated. Such a breakthrough would have far reaching medical and public health implications that go far beyond epilepsy. But before we can have those breakthroughs there need to be studies. I strongly urge the support of SB 1064 and would be happy to answer any questions.